

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BAMA KO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5779
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USUN NEW YORK 337

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BAMA KO 0722

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, ML, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO MALI

REF: BAMA KO 0655

1. SUMMARY: FRENCH AND MALIANS CONSIDER GISCARD VISIT
A GREAT SUCCESS. WE AGREE. ACCORDING TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR,
PRINCIPAL MOTIVATION OF FRENCH FOR VISIT WAS TO BOLSTER
MALIAN PRESIDENT TRAORE, AND THEY SUCCEEDED. AFTER
CONCLUSION UPCOMING NEGOTIATIONS ON MONETARY ACCORDS,
FRENCH EXPECT TO CONTINUE TO GUARANTEE CONVERTIBILITY OF
MALIAN CURRENCY. THEY WILL ALSO UNDERTAKE EVALUA-
TION OF MALI'S MINERAL RESOURCES, AN INDICATION OF MALIAN UN-
HAPPINESS WITH SOVIET PERFORMANCE IN THAT FIELD. DEFENSE
MINISTER DOUKARA MADE INFORMAL REQUEST FOR ARMS AID, WHICH
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FRENCH ARE DISINCLINED TO GIVE EXCEPT IN VERY SMALL WAYS.
PRESIDENT TRAORE WILL ATTEND APRIL FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT IN
DAKAR. WESTERN SAHARA DID NOT COME UP. FRANCE DELIBERATELY
CHOSE MALI AS VENUE TO ANNOUNCE CESSATION ALL ARMS SALES
TO SOUTH AFRICA. VISIT WAS DEFINITE PLUS FOR FRANCE AND
FOR WEST. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING ARE COMMENTS OF MALIAN AND FRENCH OFFICIALS MADE TO AMBASSADOR IN TWO SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS CONCERNING GISCARD'S VISIT TO MALI FEBRUARY 13 TO 15, 1977.

3. DIRECTOR GENERAL, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. AMBASSADOR HAD ASKED TO SEE SECRETARY GENERAL SEYDOU TRAORE, WHO WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE BEEN MORE FORTHCOMING THAN DIRECTOR GENERAL HALIDOU TOURE, BUT TRAORE WAS LEAVING TOWN AND TOURE WAS BEST SUBSTITUTE AVAILABLE. IN CONVERSATION FEBRUARY 16, DAY AFTER GISCARD'S DEPARTURE, TOURE SAID IT WAS TOO EARLY TO UNDERTAKE THOROUGH ASSESSMENT OF VISIT, ESPECIALLY SINCE MOST SIGNIFICANT MEETINGS HAD BEEN TETE-A-TETE BETWEEN TWO PRESIDENTS. HE CONSIDERED VISIT MOST SUCCESSFUL AND STATED THERE HAD BEEN "PERFECT AGREEMENT" ON BOTH SIDES.

4. TOURE WENT ON TO COMMENT THAT THERE WAS NO REASON NOT TO HAVE "PERFECT AGREEMENT" BECAUSE FRANCE AND MALI HAD SHARED LONG PERIOD OF HISTORY, FRANCE HAD GIVEN MALI FRENCH LANGUAGE, AND MALI CONSEQUENTLY UNDERSTOOD FRENCH CULTURE. FRANCE WAS ALSO SINGLE LARGEST AID DONOR AND, MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, GUARANTEED CONVERTIBILITY OF MALIAN CURRENCY.

5. TOURE CONTINUED BY PRAISING GISCARD AS "GRAND SEIGNEUR" AND GREAT INTELLECTUAL WHO DID NOT NEED HELP OF EXPERTS BECAUSE HE KNEW MALI'S PROBLEMS INTIMATELY FROM HIS TIME AS MINISTER OF FINANCE. GISCARD TOOK THE BEST OF PAST AND ADAPTED IT FOR FUTURE; HE WAS, TOURE
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SAID, A "MODERN MAN".

6. COMMENT: HALIDOU TOURE IS LEADING DOCTRINAIRE RADICAL IN FOREIGN OFFICE. HE HAS IN PAST TOLD FRENCH AMBASSADOR THAT HE CONSIDERED HIMSELF "ALIENATED" IN SENSE THAT FRENCH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE HAD MADE HIM NEITHER FRENCH NOR MALIAN AND HE WOULD REGRET THAT CONDITION ALL OF HIS LIFE. BUT HE HAS ADDED THAT ON BALANCE HE HAD MORE REASON TO BE GLAD OF HIS FRENCH EDUCATION THAN TO RESENT IT. TOURE'S HIGHLY FAVORABLE COMMENTS RE VISIT ARE THUS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING BUT THEY UNDOUBTEDLY DO NOT MEAN ANY REAL CHANGE OF OUTLOOK ON HIS PART. RATHER, THEY REFLECT GENUINE SUCCESS OF GISCARD'S VISIT AND THAT PERCEPTION OF IT BY THE MILITARY COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION.
END COMMENT.

7. FRENCH AMBASSADOR ROBERT MAZEYRAC. BY TIME OF CONVERSATION FEBRUARY 17, FRENCH AMBASSADOR WAS UP ON WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED IN VARIOUS SESSIONS OF VISIT EXCEPT FOR FINAL

PRIVATE MEETING BETWEEN GISCARD AND MALIAN PRESIDENT MOUSSA TRAORE MORNING FEBRUARY 15. THERE HAD BEEN ABSOLUTELY NO TIME TO DEBRIEF FRENCH PRESIDENT BEFORE TAKE-OFF EARLY SAME AFTERNOON. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF MAZEYRAC'S REMARKS, MADE VOLUNTARILY OR IN RESPONSE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

A. FRENCH MOTIVATION FOR VISIT. FIRST REASON WAS TO REMOVE "ANOMALY" OF LONG-PENDING INVITATION. WHEN MALIAN PRESIDENT MOUSSA TRAORE HAD VISITED FRANCE IN 1972 HE HAD INVITED FRENCH PRESIDENT POMPIDOU TO COME TO MALI. POMPIDOU ACCEPTED BUT THEN DIED. MALIANS HAD PURSUED MATTER AND SO HAD MAZEYRAC, RESULTING IN GISCARD VISIT. SECOND AND MORE IMPORTANT MOTIVE WAS TO BOOST TRAORE, WHOSE POSITION WAS "THREATENED". FRENCH BELIEVED CURRENT MALIAN PRESIDENT WAS BETTER THAN ANY LIKELY REPLACEMENT: HE WAS HONEST, SINCERE, AND NATIONALIST. HE WAS UNFORTUNATELY NOT DECISIVE IN AUTHORITARIAN SENSE, PREFERRING TO GOVERN BY CONSENSUS, BUT COULD TAKE DECISIONS WHEN PUSHED. SOMEONE LIKE DEFENSE MINISTER DOUKARA, FOR EXAMPLE, MIGHT BE MORE DECISIVE
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BUT HE WAS OPPORTUNIST, DID NOT HAVE TRAORE'S GOOD QUALITIES, AND, SINCE TRAORE WAS NOW LEANING A BIT TOWARD WEST, MIGHT TAKE OPPOSITE TACK. FRENCH CONSIDERED GISCARD VISIT HAD IN FACT ACHIEVED "HELP-TRAORE" AIM.

B. MALIAN RECEPTION. MAZEYRAC SAID AS TIME OF FRENCH PRESIDENT'S ARRIVAL APPROACHED, MALIAN OFFICIALS GOT "STAGE FRIGHT" IN ANXIETY TO MAKE VISIT A SUCCESS. THEY TOOK GREAT PAINS AND, IN THE END, EVERYTHING HAD FALLEN INTO PLACE. FRENCH HAD EXPECTED GREETERS TO BE YOUNG CHILDREN AND OLD VETERANS OF FRENCH ARMY; CHILDREN THERE WERE, BUT VERY FEW VETERANS. INSTEAD, MOST OF CROWDS LINING 14-KILOMETER ROUTE FROM AIRPORT TO PRESIDENTIAL PALACE WERE BETWEEN 17 AND 30 YEARS OLD, REFLECTING PRESENT AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MALIAN POPULATION AND HAVING LITTLE OR NO EXPERIENCE OF FRENCH PRESENCE.

C. MALIAN-FRENCH RELATIONS. IN SPEECH AT PALACE RECEPTION EVENING OF FEBRUARY 14, PRESIDENT TRAORE SAID: "MALI WAS EVEN LONG AND UNFAIRLY PRESENTED AS FUNDAMENTALLY HOSTILE TO THE WEST, AND THEREFORE TO FRANCE. THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH WE OBTAINED OUR INDEPENDENCE EXPLAIN BUT IN NO WISE JUSTIFY SUCH ASSETIONS". FRENCH AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT IN MEETINGS WITH FRENCH DELEGATION, TRAORE STRESSED SAME THEME IN MUCH MORE DIRECT FASHION. HE POINTED TO SPONTANEITY AND WARMTH OF POPULAR RECEPTION IN BAMA KO AND TIMBUKTU AND SAID SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS COULD NOT POSSIBLY TAKE PLACE IN ANYTHING BUT FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BAMA KO 0722

D. FRANCO-MALIAN MONETARY ACCORDS. ACCORDS WERE
FIRST CONCLUDED FEBRUARY 15, 1967 (GISCARD'S VISIT CAME
ALMOST EXACTLY TEN YEARS LATER), WERE RENEWED FOR FIVE
YEARS IN 1972, AND ARE DUE TO EXPIRE IN MAY 1977.
IN NEGOTIATING COMMUNIQUE AT CONCLUSION GISCARD'S
VISIT, MALIANS INSISTED ON LANGUAGE COMMITTING FRENCH TO
"GUARANTEE" CONVERTIBILITY OF MALIAN FRANC, WHEREAS
FRENCH MINISTER OF FINANCE WOULD HAVE NOTHING APPROACHING
SUCH COMMITMENT. FRENCH AMBASSADOR FINALLY FOUND COMPROMISE
FORMULA ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH SIDES: "THE TWO PARTIES
AGREED TO CONDUCT SPEEDILY NEGOTIATIONS CONCERNING THE
RENEWAL OF THE MONETARY ACCORDS, PARTICULARLY WITH A
VIEW TO MAINTAINING THE CONVERTIBILITY OF THE MALIAN FRANC."
ACTUALLY, FRENCH EXPECT TO CONTINUE GUARANTEE CONVERTIBILITY,
BUT THEY ARE HOPEFUL BURDEN WILL BE LESSENERED IN NOT TOO
DISTANT FUTURE. THEY CONSIDER THAT MALI'S IMPROVED
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EXPORT PERFORMANCE MAY PERMIT BALANCE IN BALANCE OF PAYMENTS
(NOT BUDGET) BY 1978 AND THAT OTHER MEASURES MIGHT
LEAD TO BALANCED BUDGET BY 1979 OR 1980, ALTHOUGH WITH NO
FUNDS FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT LEFT OVER.
THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF MALI'S ENTERING UMOA

(WEST AFRICAN MONETARY UNION) AND CHANGING TO CFA FRANC BECAUSE MALI WAS "SICK MAN" DFD UMOA MEMBERS WOULD NOT WANT TO TAKE ON PROBLEM. EVENTUAL MEMBERSHIP, HOWEVER, REMAINED FRENCH HOPE.

E. MINERAL RESEARCH. FRANCE AGREED TO TAKE ACTIVE PART IN MINERALOGICAL AND METALLURGICAL STUDY OF IRON ORE AT BALE AND TO UNDERTAKE "COMPLETE AND SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION OF MINERAL RESOURCES OF MALI". MALIANS ASKED FRANCE TO TAKE ON PROJECT, WHICH FRENCH AMBASSADOR SAID INDICATED DISSATISFACTION WITH SOVIETS, WHO HAD HERETOFORE KEPT MINERAL RESEARCH IN THEIR DOMAIN. SOVIETS HAD AS USUAL ONLY "PRETENDED" TO PROSPECT, AND MALIANS HAD CONSEQUENTLY TURNED TO FRENCH, A MOVE LIKELY TO DISPLEASE USSR. FRENCH WERE CONVINCED MALI HAD SIGNIFICANT MANGANESE, IRON AND PHOSPHATE DEPOSITS AND PERHAPS URANIUM AS WELL. THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS ANY PETROLEUM. LANGUAGE OF COMMUNIQUE COULD MEAN ANYTHING FROM GEOLOGICAL MAP (ALREADY IN HAND) TO EXPLORATION AND WHAT FRENCH ACTUALLY DID HAD STILL TO BE WORKED OUT.

F. FRENCH ARMS SALES TO SOUTH AFRICA. FRANCE HAD FOR SOME TIME PROHIBITED NEW ORDERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA FOR MILITARY GROUND AND AIR EQUIPMENT BUT SEVERAL MONTHS AGO MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO STOP EXPORT OF ALL SUCH EQUIPMENT UNDER EARLIER CONTRACTS OR OTHERWISE. FRENCH PRESIDENT DELIBERATELY WAITED TO MAKE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW POLICY UNTIL VISIT TO MALI, ON AFRICAN CONTINENT. (WE DO NOT KNOW SIGNIFICANCE OF OMISSION "NAVAL" EQUIPMENT.)

G. MALIAN REQUEST FOR ARMS. ARMS FOR MALI DID NOT COME UP IN FORMAL MEETINGS, BUT IN AIRCRAFT ON WAY TO CONFIDENTIAL

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TIMBUKTU DEFENSE MINISTER DOUKARA PUT QUESTION TO FRENCH OFFICIAL SITTING ACROSS FROM HIM (PROBABLY MINISTER OF COOPERATION ROBERT GALLEY BUT MEMORY FAILS). DOUKARA STATED MALI DID NOT LIKE TO BE DEPENDENT ON SOVIET ARMS AND ASKED FRANCE TO HELP OUT. FRENCH INTERLOCUTOR MADE NONCOMMITTAL REPLY AND SAID DOUKARA COULD BRING MATTER UP WHEN HE VISITED PARIS IN NEXT FEW MONTHS.

ACTUALLY FRENCH WERE NOT INCLINED, SAID MAYZERAC, TO DO MUCH IN ARMS FIELD IN MALI BECAUSE, IN EFFECT, UNLESS THEY REPLACED SOVIETS ENTIRELY, ANY FRENCH ARMS AID ONLY SAVED SOVIETS MONEY WHILE HAVING NO IMPACT ON THEIR INFLUENCE. FRENCH COULD SEE POSSIBILITY FAR DOWN THE LINE OF TAKING OVER AN ENTIRE SECTOR, SUCH AS AIR, BUT THAT WAS NOT REMOTELY POSSIBLE NOW. FOR PRESENT, IF DOUKARA RAISED SUBJECT IN FORTHCOMING TRIP TO PARIS, FRANCE MIGHT (REPEAT MIGHT) BE DISPOSED TO PROVIDE SOPHISTICATED DESERT VEHICLES, WHICH FRENCH SPECIALIZED

IN AND SOVIETS DID NOT MAKE.

H. WESTERN SAHARA. TWO PRESIDENTS DID NOT DISCUSS WESTERN SAHARA, POSSIBLY BECAUSE MOUSSA TRAORE MIGHT HAVE BEEN EMBARRASSED AT INABILITY FIND SOLUTION. IN EARLIER MEETING IN CONNECTION PREPARATIONS FOR GISCARD VISIT, MALIAN PRESIDENT HAD SAID TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR THAT SITUATION WAS AT AN IMPASSE AND HAD INDICATED SOME FRUSTRATION THAT MALI, DESPITE VARIOUS EFFORTS, HAD NOT BEEN ABLE COME UP WITH KEY. MALIANS, SAID FRENCH AMBASSADOR, FELT THEY SHOULD HAVE POWER TO SETTLE THESE THINGS, AS MODIBO KEITA HAD MEDIATED BORDER DISPUTES IN NEIGHBORHOOD BUT UNFORTUNATELY MOUSSA TRAORE DID NOT HAVE STATURE OR POLITICAL CLOUT OF HIS PREDECESSOR.

I. FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT. PRESIDENT TRAORE TOLD GISCARD HE WOULD DEFINITELY ATTEND FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT IN DAKAR NEXT APRIL. LAST TIME AROUND, TRAORE HAD BEEN ON-AGAIN, OFF-AGAIN ON PARTICIPATION, ALTHOUGH IN THE END HE HAD GONE TO PARIS AND WAS SOMEWHAT WIDE-EYED TO FIND HIMSELF IN "BIG LEAGUE".
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THERE WOULD BE NO HESITATION IN APRIL.

J. COMMENT: BOTH FRENCH AND MALIANS CONSIDER GISCARD VISIT RESOUNDING SUCCESS. WE DO TOO, AND WE NOTE THAT MALIANS, ESPECIALLY FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS OF ALL RANKS, ARE PLEASED AT OUR ASSESSMENT. MALI'S VISIBLE DESIRE TO MAKE VISIT SUCCEED IN TURN REVEALS DESIRE FOR MORE BALANCED ALIGNMENT. MALIAN EFFORT (WHICH FRANCE RECIPROCATED), REAFFIRMATION OF FRENCH-MALIAN TIES, AND PRESTIGE ACCRUING TO MOUSSA TRAORE ARE PLUSSES FOR FRANCE AND FOR WEST. PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR VISIT WAS POLITICAL, AND POLITICAL OBJECTIVES WERE MET.
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